

Exhibit 30



Illustration by Karolis Strautniekas

ANNALS OF ESPIONAGE

THE BLACK CUBE CHRONICLES: THE PRIVATE INVESTIGATORS

How two operatives tasked with surveilling reporters became embroiled in an international plot to suppress sexual-assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein.

By Ronan Farrow

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This is the first installment in a three-part series. [Read Part II here](#) and [Part III here](#). Support The New Yorker's award-winning journalism by [subscribing here](#).

On a cold day in late 2016, two men sat in a corner at Nargis Café, an Uzbek and Russian restaurant in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. The place was decorated with tchotchkies from the

steppes and ceramic depictions of peasant life: grandmas in babushkas, farmers with sheep. On a tiled wall nearby, a blue-and-white evil eye hung on a string.

One of the men was Russian, the other Ukrainian; both were born in the disintegrating Soviet Union. Roman Khaykin, the Russian, was short and trim and bald, with a snub nose and dark eyes. Everything else about him was pale: his eyebrows were thin; his face was bloodless. He was originally from the city of Kislovodsk, whose name translates to “sour waters.” Igor Ostrovskiy, the Ukrainian, was taller and a little fat. He had curly hair that got unruly when he let it grow out. He and his family had fled to the United States in the early nineties. Ostrovskiy was curious and sometimes meddlesome. During high school, he’d suspected that several classmates were selling stolen credit-card numbers and had helped law enforcement disrupt the operation.

Khaykin and Ostrovskiy spoke in accented English enlivened with Russian idioms—“*Krasavchik!*” Khaykin would often say, a word derived from “handsome” but used to praise a job well done. Both men were in the business of subterfuge and surveillance. In 2011, Ostrovskiy, a private investigator, had found himself between jobs. He’d Googled “Russian private investigators” and then cold e-mailed Khaykin, who had a company called InfoTactic, to ask for work. Khaykin liked Ostrovskiy’s chutzpah and started hiring him for surveillance jobs. They were meeting at Nargis to discuss potential work.

MORE IN THE BLACK CUBE CHRONICLES

Part II: The Undercover Operative

Published on October 8, 2019.

Part III:

The Double Agent

Published on October 9, 2019.

As plates of kebab arrived, Khaykin explained that he'd started working as a subcontractor for a new client, a firm that he wouldn't name but that was bringing in big business. "I'm into some cool shit," Khaykin said. "Some dark stuff." He'd adopted some new tactics, too. He could get bank records and unauthorized credit reports. He had ways of tracking a phone's geolocation data. He said that the phone high jinks usually cost a few thousand dollars, with cheaper options for gullible marks and more expensive ones for those who proved elusive. Khaykin said that he'd already used the tracking method successfully, for a case in which one family member had hired him to find another.

Ostrovskiy assumed that Khaykin was exaggerating. But he needed work. And Khaykin, it turned out, needed more manpower to serve his new patron.

In October of 2016, as reporters circled allegations of sexual assault and harassment against the film producer Harvey Weinstein, Weinstein and his lawyers hired Black Cube, an Israeli private-intelligence agency. At first, according to sources close to the Black Cube operation, the agency believed that it had been hired to counter a negative campaign against Weinstein, and expected that the work would concentrate on his business rivals. But the agency soon began to receive assignments to spy on women with sexual-harassment and assault accusations against Weinstein, and on reporters

investigating those accusations. Black Cube, whose staff included former members of Mossad and other Israeli intelligence and military agencies, specialized in deception, including the use of front companies and operatives with false identities. (Weinstein has denied “any allegations of non-consensual sex.”)

Hiring the agency was only a part of Weinstein’s larger effort to prevent the disclosure of the sexual-abuse claims. He also hired the private-investigation firm co-founded by Jack Palladino, who was best known for working to undermine women who had accused former President Bill Clinton of sexual misconduct. As a part of its work for Weinstein, Palladino’s firm created dossiers on both journalists and accusers. Under the guise of assembling research for a book about his company, Weinstein also hired some of his former employees to compile lists of targets and then contact the people on those lists. The lists included reporters at *The New Yorker*, the *Times*, and *New York* magazine; the actresses Rose McGowan, Rosanna Arquette, and Annabella Sciorra; and secondary sources who might be able to confirm those women’s stories.

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But Black Cube played the largest role in Weinstein’s efforts to suppress the stories. Weinstein shared the lists of targets with the Israeli agency, which forwarded them to a network of operatives around the world. *The New Yorker* previously reported that those operatives included a journalist whom the agency hired and a dedicated spy who posed under multiple false identities to gain access to journalists and accusers. Black Cube also hired Khaykin and Ostrovskiy, as subcontractors, and asked them to surveil people on the target lists. I wrote a series of pieces on Weinstein and his enablers in the fall of 2017. During the time that I was reporting the first of those stories, Khaykin and Ostrovskiy staked out my apartment building and tailed me to the offices of NBC, where I worked as a correspondent, and later to the offices of *The New Yorker*. At one point, Khaykin claimed to have successfully used my cell phone to track my location. (A source close to the Black Cube operation said that the agency was unaware of, and did not authorize, the cell-phone tracking.) The two men also performed counter-surveillance, making sure that Black Cube operatives weren’t followed to meetings, which often took place in hotel lobbies or upscale restaurants in Manhattan. At those meetings, Ostrovskiy would order

meals—a perk of the job—while discreetly eavesdropping and recording the encounters. Some of the meetings he monitored were unrelated to Weinstein and concerned far-flung locations, including Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Russia. For Ostrovskiy, much of the work was shrouded in mystery; the layers of command meant that he didn’t know why he was following his targets, or for whom.

Ostrovskiy had spent most of his career as a private investigator on more mundane jobs—digging up dirt for custody cases, uncovering evidence of insurance fraud, or spying on cheating spouses. The early months of 2017, after he resumed working for Khaykin, were dominated by these kinds of assignments, for which he was paid thirty-five dollars an hour, plus expenses. That summer, however, Khaykin began giving Ostrovskiy assignments that came from the anonymous new client. Khaykin said little about these jobs. Sometimes he would send screenshots of documents that featured the addresses, phone numbers, birth dates, and biographical information of targets. Often, the screenshots included information on spouses and other family members. Although Ostrovskiy didn’t know it, the information was pulled from dossiers that Black Cube had compiled for Harvey Weinstein.

In the summer of 2017, as I was speaking to Weinstein’s accusers and colleagues, Ostrovskiy and Khaykin began meeting at dawn near my apartment building, on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Some days, they would stay in Khaykin’s car, a silver Nissan Pathfinder. Other times, the two would use separate cars. Khaykin would be ready to follow me if I left the building, and Ostrovskiy would keep an eye on my apartment. When separated, they stayed in touch by text.

The investigators had been given photos of me and had done database searches of their own. They monitored my social-media accounts and those of my friends and relatives, trying to track my movements. The pair sat in front of my building, chain-smoking and getting bagels from a restaurant around the corner. The surveillance often dragged on for hours, and there were few opportunities for bathroom breaks. “I need to use a bottle,” Ostrovskiy once texted Khaykin. “If you nearby I can wait.” He resigned himself to using the bottle.

Khaykin and Ostrovskiy sometimes disagreed about how best to conduct the surveillance, bickering in their texts and calls. Under the impression that I was on the “Today” show one morning, and

assuming that I would be at Rockefeller Center, where the show tapes, Khaykin wrote to Ostrovskiy, “Is it worth going? To see if we get him coming out?”

“It’s a really busy area, Rockefeller Center,” Ostrovskiy replied. “We don’t have enough people to cover all the entrances and exits.”

At times, the investigators were hapless. One day, Ostrovskiy and Khaykin spotted one of my neighbors, to whom I bore a passing resemblance, coming out of my apartment building. They gave chase. Ostrovskiy followed by car, filming on a Panasonic camcorder, and Khaykin pursued on foot. On a later day, when Ostrovskiy was alone on duty, he followed the same man again, drawing near enough to touch him. Sensing that something was wrong, Ostrovskiy dialled my number.

Upstairs, in my apartment, I picked up a call from a number I didn’t recognize. “Hello?” I said, and heard a brief exclamation in Russian before the line went dead. I put down the phone confused and unnerved. Downstairs, my neighbor walked on, unaware that Ostrovskiy had been following him.

“Seems like no march,” Ostrovskiy texted Khaykin. “Back at residence now.” In his car, he searched Google for better photos of me and made light of the mistake. “Found a good ID pic,” he wrote, and sent his boss a picture of me and my sister Dylan, at around ages four and six, in our parents’ arms. “Going off this one we should be good.”

“Lol,” Khaykin replied. Later, as if to make sure that Ostrovskiy was kidding, Khaykin sent a screenshot from one of the dossiers, showing my birthday.

I wasn’t the only one Ostrovskiy and Khaykin were following; they also billed a few hours trailing Jodi Kantor, a reporter from the *Times*, who was also working on a story about Weinstein, on one occasion taking photographs of her as she commuted to work on the subway.

One morning in August of 2017, Khaykin called Ostrovskiy and told him that they would be relying on a new surveillance tactic: they would use my cell phone. Ostrovskiy thought of Khaykin’s boast, the previous fall, that he had the means to obtain a phone’s geolocation data. Shortly after noon that day, Khaykin started sending Ostrovskiy screenshots of maps, marked with pin-drops indicating the latitude, longitude, and elevation of a moving target. Khaykin seemed to have found a way to track my phone.

"It's the area near World Trade Center," Ostrovskiy wrote to Khaykin, after receiving the maps. "Heading there now." And then, "Any additional info where to expect him to come out from?" "No data," Khaykin replied.

"Ok will look around," Ostrovskiy wrote.

The information that Khaykin sent to Ostrovskiy was correct. That day, I was at the World Trade Center for my first meeting with David Remnick, the editor of *The New Yorker*, to discuss the reporting on Weinstein that the magazine would eventually publish. I was on edge. In the preceding weeks, I'd begun to suspect that I was being followed. My building superintendent had told me that he'd seen men lurking outside. Sources had advised me to get a gun and move out of my apartment.

The day of that meeting, hundreds of text messages flooded my phone. "(Survey) Should Trump be impeached?" they said, one after another. "Reply to cast your vote. To unsubscribe from our list . . ." Each came from a different number. I swiped away the texts, then finally gave up and responded to opt out, which seemed not to help. In the same time frame, unbeknownst to me, Khaykin was sending Ostrovskiy the maps accurately pinpointing my location.

I left the meeting at *The New Yorker* feeling anxious. Suspecting that I'd been followed on the subway in the past, I decided to hail a cab. As I made my way uptown, I went right by Khaykin and Ostrovskiy, who were waiting near *The New Yorker's* office, hoping to intercept me.

In October and November of 2017, *The New Yorker* published the stories on Weinstein's alleged predation. One of those stories revealed that Weinstein had hired Black Cube to surveil me, Kantor, and other reporters who were investigating him. But it wasn't until the summer of 2018 that I learned that Black Cube had hired Khaykin and Ostrovskiy. That July, I posted a picture on social media of a frying pan marketed under the brand Black Cube. I jokingly wrote, "Scratch resistant. May use false identities and shell companies to extract information."

A few weeks later, I got a call on my cell phone. The caller I.D. read "Axiom." Soon after, I got a text: "I am trying to reach you directly and privately. It's regarding a Fry Pan that's Scratch Resistant. Sometimes I cook and the black coating scares me."

I wrote back, “Can you say more about who you are?”

“I can say I do surveillance,” came the reply. “We will need to meet discreetly and make sure we are not followed.”

A few days later, I was waiting at a Brazilian restaurant in the theatre district to meet the new source. My phone rang with an encrypted Signal call. “Axiom” appeared on the screen again and I answered.

“Don’t order,” a man’s voice said. I looked around but couldn’t see anyone. “You are wearing the messenger bag, light-blue shirt, and slightly darker jeans,” the man said. He told me to leave the restaurant and then walk slowly, adding, “Walk against traffic, please.”

Outside, I craned my neck to look behind me. “Don’t look around,” the man told me, sounding a little annoyed. He directed me through a combination of calls and texts: “I’ll be about a half a block away, so please stop for 1–1.5 minutes at the intersections. I’m going to make sure no same people show up there from here. Don’t look, just walk naturally. Against traffic.” He told me to stop at a basement Peruvian restaurant that had no cell reception. “Ask for a table in the back, all the way in the back,” he said. I did as he asked. Ten minutes later, a man sat down across from me. His hair was dark and curly, and he was a little soft around the middle. He had a thick Ukrainian accent.

“I’m a concerned party,” Ostrovskiy told me. He slid a phone across the table and motioned for me to swipe through the pictures on it. There was my block, my front door, my superintendent. And there was the Nissan, with two men inside: Ostrovskiy, dark and chubby, and Khaykin, pale and bald. Ostrovskiy told me that they were part of a local private-investigation firm, licensed in New York. “But the work product, the final reports, Black Cube was putting their name on it,” he said. Ostrovskiy had read the article I’d written about Black Cube and recognized the description of the target list. He had sent the story to Khaykin and then confronted him about it during a stakeout. Khaykin had seemed irritated but eventually said, “Now you know who we work for.” (A source close to the Black Cube operation said that InfoTactic was only one “piece of the puzzle” in the firm’s operations, and that it was common practice to use locally licensed investigators for surveillance and counter-surveillance.)

Ostrovskiy told me that the more run-of-the-mill investigative work he did “might not be ethical, but it’s legitimate.” He said that he felt differently about the work for Black Cube. “I fear that it may be

illegal,” he told me. Ostrovskiy described the various efforts to track me, in person and through my phone. He said that he had objections to the tactics that had been used against me. And it wasn’t just me; although the Weinstein operation was over, Ostrovskiy was still following people for Black Cube, and he was hoping to learn why.

He read me a list of surveillance targets and the dates and times of each assignment. Most of the meetings had taken place at upscale hotel restaurants, where Ostrovskiy had monitored meetings between Black Cube agents and marks who appeared to be experts in technology and cybercrime, particularly in new tools for hacking and monitoring cell phones. Ostrovskiy said that the information he was given in each case was limited and “designed to be traceable back to me.” He was anxious that he was being watched and that Black Cube would learn that we were meeting. He had swept the area around the restaurant before entering.

I was also becoming more careful: I’d asked a colleague to follow a few blocks behind me and keep an eye on the restaurant while the meeting took place. Ostrovskiy and I left the Peruvian restaurant separately, ten minutes apart. A short time later, my colleague called. A man had apparently followed Ostrovskiy and me to the restaurant, waited outside as we entered, and then lingered by the door for more than an hour.

At first, Ostrovskiy wouldn’t give me the name of his boss. But there were enough clues in the pictures to help me figure out his identity. When I Googled the name that I’d come up with, I found a promotional video. “I’m the guy out in the field. The action-taker,” a bald man with a Russian accent said in the video. “My name is Roman Khaykin, and I’m the founder of InfoTactic Group.”

A techno beat played. Over footage of buttonhole cameras, a narrator promised clients “the best high-tech surveillance equipment.” Khaykin, doing his best impression of James Bond or Ethan Hunt, darted athletically through crowds. It was beguilingly cheesy. “When I was young and first learned how to read,” Khaykin said, “I would fascinate my parents with my ability to memorize the text of my favorite book—Sherlock Holmes.” (Khaykin declined repeated requests for comment. His attorney initially confirmed details presented to him in a fact-checking call, but then suggested that the information was false, without offering specifics.)

In the months that followed, Ostrovskiy kept passing along tips about InfoTactic's operations for Black Cube, and about the meetings between Black Cube agents and technology experts. Sometimes I'd go watch the meetings unfold from afar. Ostrovskiy and I would meet, too, at hole-in-the-wall restaurants—though on some occasions we would leave immediately and carry out our conversations while walking along side streets. Once, Ostrovskiy and I sat in the corner of a hotel lobby and spoke for half an hour before he abruptly excused himself. He came back worried, saying that we had to move—he suspected that two men sitting nearby were following us. They looked like professionals, and they'd been watching us too closely. We took a cab, and then another cab; Ostrovskiy asked one driver to pull over on the shoulder of the West Side Highway and wait for any potential tails to either go by or identify themselves by slowing down.

At one point, Ostrovskiy told me that Black Cube had asked Khaykin to find a spy pen capable of secretly recording audio, and he showed me a picture of the pen that they'd procured. It was black, with a silver clip—nothing you'd notice if you weren't looking closely, but with a few distinctive features, including a narrow ring of chrome on its barrel.

In January of 2019, not long after Ostrovskiy had told me about the spy pen, his work for Black Cube went awry. He was asked to tail a lunch meeting between a Black Cube agent and John Scott-Railton, a researcher for the watchdog group Citizen Lab. The Black Cube agent, a middle-aged man with a neat white beard, was pretending to be a man named Michel Lambert and had told Scott-Railton that he worked for a Paris-based agricultural-technology firm called CPW-Consulting. The operative claimed that he wanted to meet about Scott-Railton's doctoral research on using kite-mounted cameras to create maps.

As the lunch progressed, the agent tried to get Scott-Railton to talk about Citizen Lab, which tracks state-backed efforts to hack and surveil journalists. The group had recently reported that software developed by an Israeli cyber-intelligence company called NSO Group had been used to hack the iPhone of a friend of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi shortly before Saudi operatives murdered Khashoggi. The revelation had sparked harsh public criticism of NSO Group, which denied that its software was used to target Khashoggi but which also declined to say whether it had sold the software to the Saudi government. At the lunch, the Black Cube operative started asking about Citizen Lab's reporting on NSO Group. He asked whether there was a "racist element" to Citizen Lab's focus on an

Israeli company. He pressed Scott-Railton for his views on the Holocaust. As they spoke, he took out a black pen with a silver clip and a chrome ring on its barrel. He laid it down on a legal pad in front of him, with the tip pointed at Scott-Railton. From a table nearby, Ostrovskiy was watching the meeting and taking photographs.

But Scott-Railton, who had found the request for the meeting suspicious, had been taping the Black Cube agent the entire time—and he'd brought his own backup. Raphael Satter, an Associated Press journalist with whom Scott-Railton had been working, was at another table, with a cameraman, who started filming the encounter. Satter then confronted the Black Cube agent, whose cover had been blown. Ostrovskiy soon got a call from Khaykin. “Our guy got burned!” Khaykin said. “Get to the lobby immediately! He needs to get out.”

The Black Cube agent hid in a back room, then ducked out of a service entrance while Ostrovskiy retrieved his car. Ostrovskiy picked up the agent and his luggage and then drove around, trying to shake potential tails. The agent frantically made calls, trying to book the first flight out of New York. Ostrovskiy noticed a tag on his luggage with the name Almog and a home address in Israel on it. The agent had been sloppy. The name was real. He was a retired Israeli security official named Aharon Almog-Assouline, who was later reported to have been involved in a string of Black Cube operations.

Black Cube and NSO Group would later deny any connection to the operation against Citizen Lab. But Almog-Assouline had been at many of the meetings that Ostrovskiy had described to me in the preceding months, which appeared to target figures who had criticized NSO Group or argued that its software was being used to hunt journalists.

Black Cube's leadership was furious about the botched operation and ordered everyone who knew about it to take a polygraph immediately. Ostrovskiy called me, worried that it was only a matter of time until he was exposed. He wanted to talk, and not just to a reporter. He had already tried to contact the F.B.I., only to be passed between skeptical agents, one of whom had hung up on him. He asked if I had a better contact in law enforcement, and I sent him the name of an official at the Southern District of New York. Soon after our call, Ostrovskiy hired a whistle-blower attorney and began the process of volunteering to be a witness.

arlier this year, Ostrovskiy and I reunited, at a French bistro on the Upper West Side.

Ostrovskiy looked as if he hadn't slept in days. I asked him why he had decided to contact me, and later, law enforcement. "I like to be able to read the news and not think somebody's holding a gun to a reporter's head, deciding what he writes," he told me. "Coming from a society where the news was controlled by those in power, I never, ever want to allow this to happen to the country that gave me and my wife and my son a chance."

Ostrovskiy and his wife had just had a baby boy, a first-generation American. "I happened to be at this intersection where we were following reporters whose stories I read, who I thought were doing something honest and good," Ostrovskiy said. "If somebody wants to attack that, that's attacking my country. That's attacking my home."

He told me that, after he'd refused to take the polygraph test for Black Cube, InfoTactic had stopped sending him jobs. Now he was starting his own firm: Ostro Intelligence. He'd still be a private investigator, but there would be a public-service angle to his work. Maybe he could help groups like Citizen Lab. "Moving forward, I'm going to try to be more involved with this kind of stuff, to better society," he said.

He showed me a few pictures of his family on his phone: his wife, looking flushed and exhausted after birth. His infant son. A blue-gray cat with clever, lamp-like eyes, looking at the new arrival. The cat's name was Spy.

This excerpt is drawn from "Catch and Kill," by Ronan Farrow, out this month from Little, Brown and Company.



Ronan Farrow is a contributing writer to The New Yorker and the author of "Catch and Kill: Lies, Spies, and a Conspiracy to Protect Predators." His reporting for The New Yorker won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for public service.

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